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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses problematic issues related to teacher education in the Professional Development School (PDS) environment, noting the assumption that partnership between the academy and the public school via PDSs is the foundation of all teacher development. It cautions that while partnership is now deeply embedded in the United States, there are disparities and divergences between stakeholders in education which partnership has failed to address and which threaten to derail teacher recruitment and teacher education. The paper highlights events in the state of Maryland, using them as an example of one dominant approach to developing partnerships in teacher education. It suggests that the problems and possibilities that exist for partnership in Maryland illustrate a broader reform agenda nationwide. The paper argues that what has not emerged is a cultural discussion on how partnerships might most usefully develop and what different kinds of partnerships could practicably exist. It recommends that there should be a plurality of partnerships in the teacher education realm. After discussing state-ism and the apparatus of educational control in Maryland, the paper examines the social market and communities of change, focusing on the emergence of charter schools and discussing the relationship to PDSs. (SM)

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Conformity or Creativity: The Problem of Teacher Development in the PDS Environment

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Sarasota, February 27-March 3, 2002

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INTRODUCTION: THE DISAPPEARANCE OF A PROFESSION?

On a level that is evidenced in our coming together here in Sarasota, organic professional growth in American education has become regulated and communicated through numerous dot.org associations, which are into the professional and commercial business of vast conferences and workshops. A cursory examination of these conference agendas shows just how bound teacher education and professional development have become to the twin motifs of modernity and partnership. This is ironic, since the vision and nature of these motifs is being foisted upon, rather than derived from, the teaching profession, and this paper will in part seek to establish that troubling assertion of passivity. Within that 'foisted' discourse is the belief, almost mystically accepted at times, that partnership between the academy and the public school, via the institutionalized Professional Development School (PDS), is the foundation of all teacher development. Indeed, the assumption is out there that the PDS is the only legitimate environment for the development of pedagogy in American teacher education. Part of a broad renewal agenda of the 1990s (National Commission, 1996; Darling-Hamrnond, 1998) teacher preparation at all levels has become intrinsically connected to this idea of partnership, but in a way the embraces a system for regulating and making accountable a narrow range of performance indices and assessment data. This accountability motif, driven by governmental policy agendas and seemingly supported by both professional consensus and research data, has also become over the past decade the main vehicle for defining professional standards. As such, the history of the PDS phenomenon represents an attempt at harmonizing professional and bureaucratic visions of teacher training.

This context was made the more personal for me after returning from one of those ubiquitous dot.org conferences recently, when a few lines of satirical comment appeared in my email inbox from a teacher education friend from a large state institution across the country in Oregon. His email offered a witty explanation on the current teacher shortage crisis in the USA. The message noted that in a democracy politicians are generally held accountable for their decisions, and this encourages them to have similar expectations about society's constituent groups. This drive toward mutual accountability leads to a belief in the need for measurement, which in turn compels

us to think up measurable objectives. From there it is a short step to target setting for different groups in the public eye, at which point experimentation, creativity and enjoyment are necessarily abandoned: hence the contemporary crisis in teacher recruitment.

Behind this tongue-in-cheek skepticism there is a trenchant insight into a current major tension of American education, and its stress on professional partnership as the basis for teacher education. For whilst partnership is now a deeply embedded element of practice in the USA, there are disparities and divergences between the stakeholders in education which partnership has failed to address and which threaten to derail teacher recruitment and teacher education. This reality bears some resemblance to affairs in the UK, but the voice of accountability and its impact on teacher education shows a distinctive American accent at this juncture. And, just perhaps, the email satire may have hit the nail on the head, at least in part, as to why teaching seems to be having some big problems in recruiting new graduates to its ranks.

In what follows I focus extensively on events in my home state, Maryland, and use these as a case study of one dominant approach to developing partnership in teacher education, not least since Maryland has set out a model which is being readily copied across the county. In this way, the problems and possibilities that exist for partnership in Maryland are illustrative of a broader reform agenda across the United States. It should be stressed up front that partnership as an abstract concept is consonant both with the majority of learning theories of the twentieth century and the pragmatic realization of resource distribution in teacher training. It is, in short, an attractive and valuable idea, and few would contend the logic of higher education and public K-12[i] education getting their acts together in the supply and education of new or veteran teachers. But what has not emerged, I will argue, is a cultural discussion on how partnerships might most usefully develop and what different kinds of partnerships could practicably exist. For whilst there is no absolute model of that most common societal partnership, marriage, so there should be plurality of partnerships in the teacher education realm. The dominant reform discourse, though, has either overlooked that fact or, more disturbingly, has ensured that such plurality is intentionally restricted. Those are value judgments that I openly assert as the basis to this

introduction, and which provide the rhetorical context as we move from here on into the evidence itself.

STATE-ISM AND THE APPARATUS OF EDUCATIONAL CONTROL

The notion of conformity is intrinsic to how partnerships have been established by State and local controlling agencies of education and this notion has given impetus, form and content to a new obligatory institution of the last decade, the Professional Development School or PDS. This was the explicit intention of the Maryland Higher Education Commission's mandated '*Redesign*' (1995), which required every teacher candidate to do an extensive internship in a specially designed Professional Development School (p.2). Lifelong learning was also central to teacher education in *Redesign* thinking, demanding that school-university partnerships must address the initial preparation and continuing education needs of teaching interns, beginning teachers, and experienced educators at various stages of their careers (p.11). But if the institutions were to co-operate, this also required new roles for faculty and teachers, so that higher education faculties were now expected to participate in school life, to contribute to school improvement action plans, to provide on-site seminars and to becoming truly school-centered in their work. In short, to take the practical dimensions and experiences of teacher training very much into their own academic world view. As mentioned above, this resembles much of the similar 1990s school-based training drive of my homeland, Great Britain. That drive saw the explosion of collaborative programs and re-distributed cost centers following the famous Circular 9/92 from the UK's Department of Education. But whilst that event marked a shift in the ideological battle between Left and Right in Britain and a struggle of control between state and profession, a different kind of battle has ensued in the USA. For in the States the contest has fundamentally revolved not between profession and agency, but rather between different modes of agency in the delivery of teacher education, in which the professional dimension has simply been removed from the equation; or in the words of one of my graduate students, Brian, head of social studies at a local middle school,

> It's ludicrous to think that we shape the decisions made about schools, kids, teaching and learning. We are expected simply to put them all into practice. It's not just about jumping hoops. It's about jumping their hoops in ways that they want us to.

The end result of partnership may be similar in Britain and the States, but the route getting there has been different. For whilst control of the reform agenda has been lost to the profession in England, the case can be made that it has simply never been made available to the profession here in the States. Brian may in fact be lamenting a situation that has always pertained in the USA. A closer analysis first of the Maryland *Redesign* agenda, and then the emerging Charter School alternative programs, is necessary here to establish this argument.

The view of partnership that dominates the state and regional scene can be described as comprehensive. By this is meant a totalizing school reform agenda built upon the interlocking components of K-12 curriculum reform and professional preparation and development reform. Key to this school component is the decade old Maryland School Performance Program, which connects student performance standards with school accountability, and then rank orders the school districts in terms of specific performance fields. This testing and reporting of performance at Grades 3, 5, and 8 in the fields of reading, writing, language usage, mathematics and social studies is overtly designed as a mechanism of school accountability. The noteworthy feature of this is that individual student performance is unreported, but rather aggregated into a school figure that allows comparison. Intriguingly, and unlike similar league tables in the UK, the data is not utilized as part of a political discourse on school choice, at least at this stage. The results are certainly publicized, but more for the benefit of informing state responses and interventions in school management (the State has recently taken over the running of three poorly performing Baltimore city schools) than for informing parent-consumer choice. Unlike the British model, the notion of purchasing power and the market levers of choice and selection by the parent-consumer run anathema to this particular bureaucratic model of reform, though as we shall see later a market model is beginning to emerge as a counter-model in recent American initiatives.
The significance of this state controlled agenda for teacher training is fundamental. If this is the curricular context to school performance and accountability, then professional training and development is clearly built upon the premise that for all students to achieve, teachers must be well prepared to teach their content fields, and their continuing development must be aimed at student achievement. And, moreover, the eye of the state is trained upon the teacher's compliance and success in achieving these externally mandated goals. Thus the 1990s saw the

incremental involvement of state jurisdiction in teacher training at both pre-service and in-service levels. The State Superintendent of Schools now has State authority for K-12 public education, teacher education certification, and the review and approval of teacher education preparation programs, as well as approval of continuing professional development experiences for state credit.

This shift over the past decade has radically altered the perception of curriculum and assessment in Maryland schools, and with it the kind of teacher partnerships and preparations that are necessary for its success. But Maryland was not prepared to simply re-craft professional development via school reform alone, but more structurally still determined in its *Redesign of Teacher Education* that new criteria for teacher education must be explicitly set out for universities and schools, and that the basis for these would be a new kind of accountable partnership. The roots of the Redesign date back to *Investing in People: Maryland's Plan for Post-Secondary Education*, completed in 1991. This report identified the improvement of teacher education as a key priority for Maryland, and set in motion a process that four years later, after extensive statewide collaboration among higher education and public school representatives, legislators, and community stakeholders, culminated in the issuance of the Maryland Higher Education Commission Task Force Report on Teacher Education. Known from the beginning as the *Redesign* of Teacher Education, this 1995 report institutionalized the defining qualities and criteria of teacher education reform in the region: partnered, top-down, structural, totalizing, accountable, funding-linked, standards-driven and performance-based.

Throughout the development of the *Redesign* and during its years of implementation, the Maryland State Department of Education partnered with the Maryland Higher Education Commission in an alliance of Maryland's two State education agencies, unprecedented in Maryland and uncommon in the nation. The *Redesign* continued the themes already underpinning school curriculum reform, thus securing both via school activities and accreditation licensing of teacher training institutions the same power of lockstep, partnered reform with which teachers had already become familiarized. The key components of the teacher education *Redesign* strategy fell into four distinctive areas, namely: strong academic background; extensive school-based

preparation, especially in professional development schools; performance assessment; and linkage with K-12 standards and priorities. Since these are so crucial to understanding the function of partnership in the state, some brief elaboration on how some of these components interplay is warranted.

The specific element of the *Redesign* that relates to partnership reveals a raft of standards, interventions and constraints on how that partnership may be forged. At the core of this is the use of extensive field-based preparation in K-12 schools for teacher candidates, including an internship within two consecutive semesters that represent, at a minimum, 100 full days in a PDS site. This arbitrary choice of 100 days has been uncritically received with little or no examination of why that should be the optimum time period in schools. Teacher candidates have these extensive internships in sites that are collaboratively planned with public school partners and that follow the Maryland Professional Development School Standards. These standards are derived from those of the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education, the largest and most influential accrediting body in the reform movement. Infused across four components of extensive internships, continuing professional development, performance assessment and student achievement, the standards set out in detail regulatory expectations and outcomes in the fields of learning, collaboration, accountability, organization and structure, and equity. The mechanism for enforcing this totalizing model is the state itself, via the carrot of generous funding for new partnerships that exemplify this approach, and the stick of accreditation, performance review and ranking of teacher training institutions for those who do not live up to the mark. Either way, the state is the *Panopticon*, the all-surveilling eye and dictator of the process. The best illustration of this is the way in which assessment is the conduit for monitoring the whole process. The language of the Maryland *Redesign* document (1995: 5) sums this up directly and essentially:

> Through the regular five-year state review cycle, the unit earns approval for its performance assessment system, which is based on the Maryland standards, the Essential Dimensions of Teaching, or the INT ASC standards. Through this system, the unit provides ongoing and summative performance feedback to candidates and data for continuous improvement of programs.

What this signifies is a tightly crafted and bound system of symmetry between teacher education and teacher performance in the classroom. The model is complete, unified and absolute in its imperative and connects teacher preparation directly to the requirements placed on the K-12 system 'priorities'. Moreover, layer upon layer of assessment data within the public school system provides both the curriculum experience and the monitoring mechanism for teacher candidates. In this system, programs prepare teacher candidates for assessment and accountability through numerous assessment programs: the Maryland Model for School Readiness [Early Childhood]; Maryland School Performance Assessment Program [MSPAP]; Maryland Core Learning Goals; Content Standards; High School Assessments; and Maryland Functional Tests. Finally the I.H.E. teacher education 'unit' uses feedback from state and NCA TE review to show annual ongoing improvement through a mandated annual Teacher Preparation Improvement Plan (TPIP) and the NCATE report process.

This monolithic system represents the advance guard of systemic renewal across the country, in which partnership is a vehicle for teacher education reform. Responses from teacher practitioners to this trend will be held over to the concluding section of this chapter. For the time being, we can conclude this section with the clear recognition that this is a system in which the teacher is not the protagonist of reform, but the deliverer, or conduit of a reform agenda that represents the wishes of bureaucratic-legislative power in society, rather than the professional experience and voice. Another model of partnership, though, is also emerging in American education, and to this contrasting approach we now turn.

THE SOCIAL MARKET AND COMMUNITIES OF CHANGE

One of the most controversial and uncertain changes in school organization in modern America is the emergence of the Charter School. This institution is intentionally built on more libertarian principles than those usually governing public education, and in the last three years the Charter School concept has found increasingly popularity especially in areas of poorly performing schools, often urban. The 'charter', mainly granted for a period of 3-5 years, allows a school to establish a contract detailing mission, program, goals, performance criteria, student selection, and

assessment of learning. Charters are issued by a sponsoring institution, ranging from the Federal government to state or local board to private organization or charity .In this arrangement the school is accountable to the sponsor for fulfilling the charter, and in return the school is given increased autonomy and license in how it carries out its obligations. The accountability relationship, however, is not exclusive to the sponsoring group alone, since the school has to show in its goals both academic and fiscal responsibility to all funding parties (including taxpayers in the case of governmental-funded schools) and to parents of the selected students.

This melding of public-private roles and stake-holding is a distinctive quality of Charter Schools and clearly aligns the Charter School movement within the broader trends of the last twenty years to incorporate market ideas, such as public-private partnerships, school choice, selection and magnet schools within the educational realm. Common to these trends, advocates of Charter Schools cite several benefits which they see as resultant from the liberalization of school organization, funding and management. Key to these are increased success and accessibility to quality education (as opposed to the supposed 'trapping' mediocrity of conventional public schools), a climate of innovation and experimentation, and a new sense of teacher professionalism coupled to community involvement and partnerships.

But if the organizational and functional nature of Charter Schools offers a stark contrast with the state systemic reform agenda, another equally significant distinction lies in the rationale or basis for each kind of reform. Whilst the state reform is orchestrated from a deficit ideology and a yearning for higher and more excellent performance by students, the Charter School movement received its impetus from different agencies with different primary motivations. Charter Schools tend to be created by three distinct groups: grassroots organizations of parents, alienated by the educational and economic status quo, and looking for a new symbol of hope and growth in schools; by entrepreneurs, looking for new partnerships for the benefit of business opportunities; and by existing schools who wish to convert to charter status, either from disillusionment with the local bureaucracy or from anxiety about state intervention. It would be wrong, however, to see these groups in tension with each others, since part of the noteworthy early successes of Charter Schools has been their ability to unite divergent groups around

specific agendas and goals. Thus it is common to discern defining qualities of Charter Schools that unite these divergent stakeholders and present the school with a clear sense of its identity and purpose, at least on surface level. Common signals of such unity are often the espousal of a particular, distinctive educational vision, which avoids the generalized and monolithic emphasis of the state-bureaucratic model above. Additionally Charter Schools are characterized by a readiness to embrace autonomy and unorthodox approaches to school management, and a clear interest in special populations. The latter characteristic is intriguing, contrasting clearly with the 'education for all' approach of the dominant reform agenda that Maryland and other states are so heavily invested in.

The exponential growth of the Charter School movement has placed it now, at the start of the 21st century, at an intriguing stage of development. Still small enough not to rival seriously the bureaucratic agenda, it is yet to be proven whether it threatens the state hegemony of education. However, neither is the movement small enough that local bureaucracies can afford to ignore it, and for the first time Charter Schools featured in the Bush-Gore Presidential race. This is not surprising. At the start of the 1990s only one state, Minnesota, had passed legislation permitting the establishment of Charter Schools. By the mid-decade that number had risen to 19, and by the close of the 20th century 36 states, plus the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico had approved their existence. Noteworthy in its refusal to grant Charter School status rights to its citizens remains the State of Maryland, which considers itself the vanguard and protector of the state-controlling reform agenda at all costs. But that will not last for long. In the face of State takeovers of three of its 'failing' school, Baltimore City Public Schools in October 2000 released its New Schools initiative, petitioning the legislature to allow city residents to start new small schools or to run existing public schools. The operators of such schools would have increased authority in school governance, staffing, budget, and curriculum, in exchange for greater accountability. In short, they would look a lot like Charter Schools, and it will be interesting to see it takes for the State legislature to accept the bait.

Additional, top-down pressure of a financial nature may also persuade the remaining reluctant states to re-assess their hegemonic control of school growth and partnership. For the Federal

Government itself, always an evolutionary rather than revolutionary force in American education, has incrementally put its bucks behind its mouth in this case. From a paltry $6 million in 1995, the U.S. Department of Education handed out $100 million in fiscal year 1999 (albeit, still a small drop in its overall budget), and the Bush Administration shows no sign of tightening the purse strings from hereon in.

How Charter Schools relate to the State-led system is fascinating, since the same language applies to both systems of provision, but in totally variant fashions. An illustration of this is the legal range of obligations that face any Charter School. States may choose varying degrees of responsibility and expectation, though common to the vast majority of such schools are policies relating to school governance, fiscal freedom, student selection and admission, instructional/ curricular requirements, staffing and labor law and accountability in terms of performance-assessment and contract renewal or revocation.

What does this mean for partnership in teacher education? Here is the 64 thousand-dollar question, since whilst the very notion of partnership is core to Charter Schools, the more narrow sense of this paper's focus on teacher education partnerships is an unknown quantity in terms of Charter Schools, yet. Despite the shortage of teachers in the USA, the primary route of training and licensing remains the State, via the usual route of a university accredited program, with mandated partnerships with PDS institutions. Monopoly training, would be a suitable epithet. Paradoxically, these partnerships between universities and PDS institutions are forged artificially and awkwardly between institutions that share very different cultural roots and identities. Certainly the partnerships that are forged can be effective, rewarding and successful, but they are organically odd, unnatural and ill-fitting. Charter Schools, meanwhile, are partnership creations at their core. They originate from natural, problem-solving communities, they depend on the sharing of visions, energies and resources, they address multi-group needs within a defined and distinct environment, and they depend on partnership between their stakeholders for their very survival. This strikes me as the kind of context very well suited for developing partnerships not only in the teaching of students, but also in the training and professional development of teachers.

This is why Charter Schools are radically challenging, not only to the status quo of the university-PDS relationship, but more significantly to the power-brokers behind and controlling that relationship, namely the State and its bureaucratic offices of education. The State may have to concede ground, ironically, since Charter Schools appear to be stepping into the breach just where the ratcheting of state policies and its monitoring systems seems to be doing little or no good: in urban, poor schools where often only badly trained or non-credentialed teachers are offering their teaching services. And finally, Charter Schools appeal to a unique American ethos, the willingness to use liberal capitalism in the service of the public good, in a way that the State eschews. Charter Schools have read wisely the American fondness for mixing private and public, for using entrepreneurship where convention fails, for taking a risk and using the hard-nosed business model when the usual approach seems to be lacking. This, like much of America, is paradoxical. For Charter Schools takes laissez-faire culture, blends it with that American love of the local community and its fiercely protected sense of identity, and offers up a cocktail that poses a direct challenge to the educational hegemony of the State. Would Charter Schools then offer a greater voice for teacher professionalism, a new liberalization of the teacher as a real change-agent partner? That it is too early to say, but what we do know is that teachers have passionate reactions to their restricted roles within the State hegemony, and that those reactions may provide some clues for Charter Schools as how best to develop teacher professionalism within their radical, distinctive American environments. Moreover, the urge for creativity has been stifled in conventional PDS evolution that the scene has been set for a legitimate abandonment of the current orthodoxy of state driven partnership. To that legitimacy, indeed imperative, of hearing the teacher voice in partnership, I turn now in a final section.

CONCLUSION: GIVING VOICE TO A SILENT PARTNER

I finish with two written comments from teacher colleagues of mine, working in Maryland and absolutely bound up with the reform agenda, in this case the MSPAP testing at grades 3,5 and 8 that Maryland is pioneering and modelling for the rest of the nation.

> The MSP APs are premised on the idea that a certain type of Instruction -co-operative, constructivist 'learning by discovery' -is superior. Given the cost of these tests, it's

> unfortunate that there's no data to show that kids who get the kind of instruction the MSDE so aggressively advocates do better. (David, 5th grade teacher)

What is revealing and troubling is not David's skepticism about the MSP AP, but the pedagogy that is claimed to underpin it. For many professional voices have praised the constructivist pedagogy of recent years, but have watched it become hi-jacked and incorporated within an accountability system for which it was not conceived nor discovered. This utilization by the State of the rhetoric and discourse of the profession is highly significant, showing how educational hegemony can express professional ideas, but in a fashion which stunts their realization and implication. At least that is the conclusion one can reasonably deduce from David's comment.

The second comment goes one stage further, showing how the outcomes of the MSPAP feature in an accountable 'league table' whereby districts are compared and pressured to ensure their improvement within the league table on an annual basis.

> Third-grade MSP AP results haven't improved statewide in the last three or four years. (Tiny Kent County is a conspicuous exception, but its gains in the third grade somehow don't spill over into the fifth grade, which is still far short of the standard. We don't hear about these anomalies because the media only give the combined results). If I were a third-grade teacher, I'd be sick and tired of struggling toward a mirage. I'd focus on teaching my students the basics, like how to read and write, and giving them the fundamental, concrete knowledge they crave at this level instead of trying to teach economic theory to eight-year-olds. (Ann, 8th grade teacher)

Ann's comments are a salutary reminder of the danger of 'partnering- out' education to too many constituents. Indeed, the notion that educational stakeholders should also uniformly control the process is a false and dangerous one. Whilst professional voice is not heard but is overwhelmed by an external discourse, then the risk remains of disenchantment. And without enchantment, there is little hope for teachers and students alike. Be they in a PDS or otherwise. This paper has sought to show that the reform agenda has missed that point in its centralizing effect of state control and an hegemonic apparatus, and that it is too early to judge yet whether the social market model offered by Charter Schools can provide a more organic, natural and flexible approach to creating educational partnerships. What is clear is that some kind of approach to achieving this is sorely necessary and missing in contemporary American teacher education.

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